

## Nomination Form

### Aotearoa/New Zealand Memory of the World Register

#### Title of the documentary heritage item or collection

This should be the complete name of the documentary heritage as it is usually known. Include dates if they are usually part of the name.

World War II New Zealand Mobile Broadcasting Unit Recordings

#### Section 1: Nominator Details

This section is for information about the source of the nomination and the authority under which it is made.

A copy of the Aotearoa/New Zealand Memory of the World programme's privacy policy is available on its [website](#).

##### 1.1 Name of nominator (person or organisation)

Full name of the person(s) or organisation(s) making the nomination. *The nomination may be submitted jointly by more than one person or organisation*

The New Zealand Archive of Film, Television and Sound Ngā Taonga Whitiāhua Me Ngā Taonga Kōrero (Operating name: Ngā Taonga Sound & Vision)

##### 1.2 Relationship to the nominated documentary heritage

Explain the nominator's relationship to the documentary heritage. *For example, the nominator may be a responsible officer of the library or archive which owns it; or he/she may be a private individual with a research interest in it.*

Ngā Taonga Sound & Vision cares for and administers the collections of the former Radio New Zealand Sound Archives Ngā Taonga Kōrero, on behalf of Radio New Zealand. The World War II Mobile Broadcasting Unit discs are part of this collection.

##### 1.3 Contact person

Provide the name of the person who is responsible for the nomination process.

Sarah Johnston, Senior Client Access Liaison, Takawaenga ā-Iwi Matua,  
Ngā Taonga Sound & Vision

#### 1.4 Contact details

Provide sufficient details to allow easy communication with the contact person.

**Email:** sarahjohnston@ngataonga.org.nz  
**Phone:** 03 3748468

## Section 2: Identity and Description of the Documentary Heritage

### 2.1 Title of inscription

If the nomination is successful, what do you want it to be titled (e.g. for certificates)? Please use a maximum of 6 words.

World War II New Zealand Mobile Broadcasting Unit Recordings

### 2.2 Description of the documentary heritage

This should include a full description of what is included in the documentary heritage, its scope and its size. Include details of the type of documents e.g. letters, film, images etc.

There are 1,592 lacquer (acetate) sound recording discs in this collection:  
1472 recorded in North Africa, the Middle East and Italy, in the so-called "U-Series".  
120 recorded during the war in the Pacific, called the "P-Series".

Most are 12-inch diameter, 78rpm and made of lacquer (nitrocellulose acetate) over an aluminium core, although some particularly fragile discs have a glass core, probably due to wartime shortages of aluminium.

The recordings begin on 27 August 1940 when the U-Series Mobile Unit sailed from New Zealand with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Contingent of the 2nd New Zealand Expeditionary Force. [The first recordings capture the sounds of departure, singing and bands on the Wellington wharves.](#)

The Unit was based initially in Egypt but followed the fighting of the New Zealand Division, travelling with it across North Africa, through Egypt into Libya and Tunisia, and then across the Mediterranean into Italy. The final recordings in this series are made after the end of the war, in December 1945, when the Unit sailed from Italy for New Zealand again.

The P-Series Pacific War recordings cover a shorter time span, from April 1943 - August 1944. They were recorded by a second Mobile Unit, which was based in New Caledonia but travelled with New Zealand forces to conflict zones such as the Solomon Islands.

The recordings were made for broadcast on radio in New Zealand. Initially the discs were flown back from North Africa to New Zealand, but after the fall of Singapore in February 1942, they had to be sent by sea, which meant many weeks could pass between recording and broadcast.

The collection contains a wide variety of recorded sound material: action reports by New Zealand broadcasters on military engagements; 'talks' by and interviews with, service personnel on their role in the war or actions they have recently been involved in; actuality field recordings of the sounds of battle; coverage of non-conflict events such as parades, medal ceremonies, speeches by V.I.P visitors, concerts, official dinners, sports matches and other social occasions, and hundreds of simple 'messages home' recorded by servicemen and women who were selected by ballot to make recordings for broadcast on radio back in New Zealand.

### **2.3 Catalogue, registration or bibliographic details**

This should include any bibliographic, registration, inventory, classification and/or call numbers that uniquely identify the documentary heritage.

Published catalogues were produced by the RNZ Sound Archives for both the U and P series recordings:

*A Catalogue of Recordings made by the New Zealand Mobile Broadcasting Unit in North Africa & Europe during World War Two.* Compiled by Norman Batty, Sound Archives, Radio New Zealand (1996) ISBN 0473036541

*A Catalogue of Recordings made by the New Zealand Mobile Broadcasting Unit in the Pacific Theatre of War during World War Two April 1943 to August 1944.* Compiled by Norman Batty, Sound Archives, Radio New Zealand (1996) ISBN 0473037688

The U-series discs are identified by their media numbers; U1-U5755, reference numbers 10942-20975

The P-series discs are identified by their media numbers: P1-P304, reference numbers 10390-11611

In Ngā Taonga's [online database](#) the collections can be found through searching on the series name: e.g. [U-series](#) (Search results should be filtered to only include audio recordings)

#### 2.4 Visual documentation

Where available and appropriate, supply photographs or videos of the documentary heritage. Please provide images that can be used for the purposes of promoting of the World.



Flight Sergeant A G Newman, one of the New Zealanders serving with the Royal Air Force in the Cassino area in Italy, records his message to be broadcast in NZ. Archibald Curry, of the NZ Broadcasting Unit, holds the microphone. Photograph taken in Venafro, Italy, on 27 April 1944 by George Robert Bull.

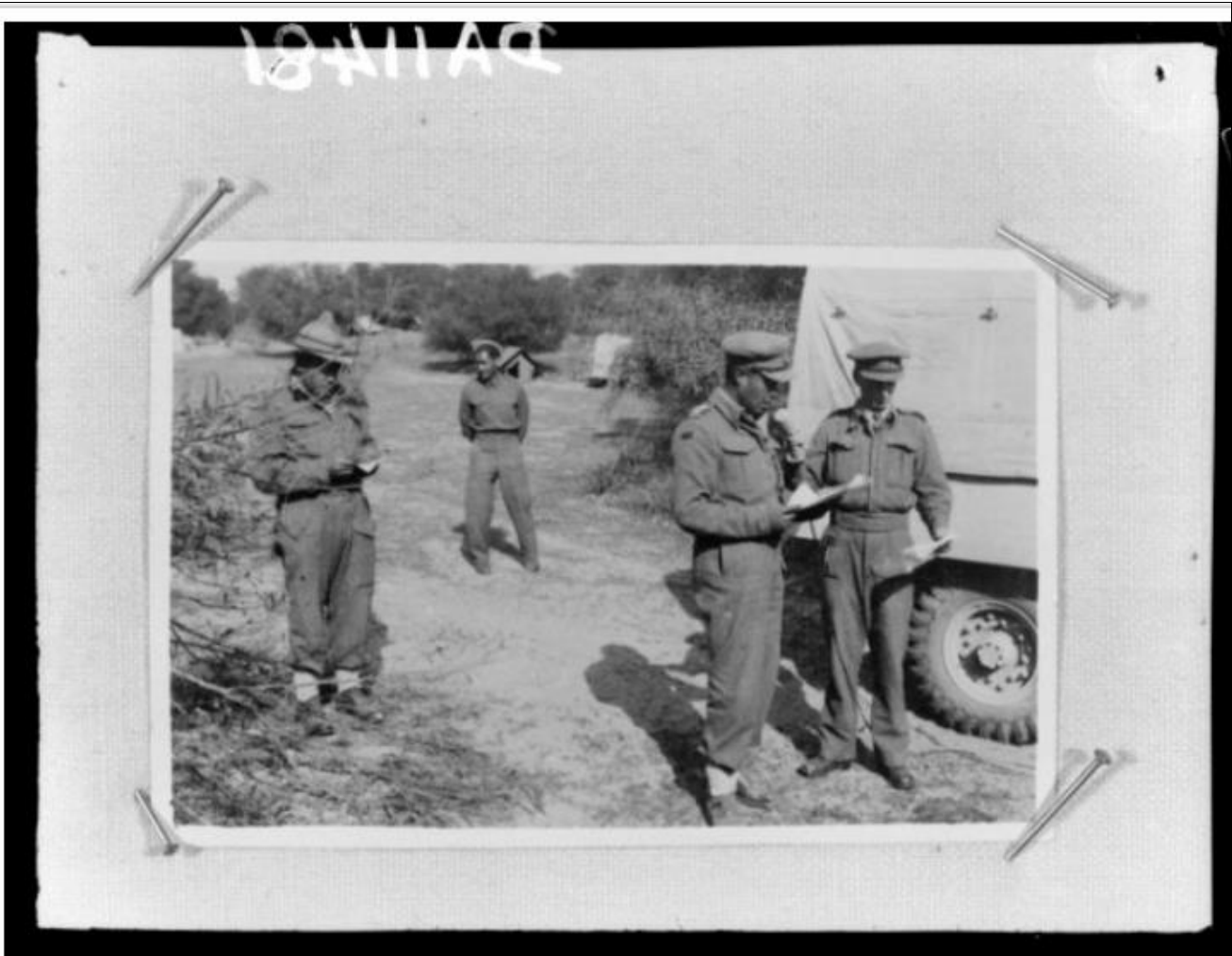
Ref: DA-05602-F Alexander Turnbull Library. ([Hear his recording here.](#))



Flight Sergeant A T Condon (Mosgiel) at the microphone as he records a message to be broadcast in New Zealand. Condon is one of the New Zealanders serving with the RAF in Italy, World War II. Photograph taken in Venafo, Italy, on 27 April 1944 by George Robert Bull. Ref: DA-05603-F Alexander Turnbull Library. ([Hear his recording here](#))



Men of the New Zealand Division in the forward areas of the Cassino Front, Italy, record messages to be broadcast home. Shows the NZ Broadcasting Unit's mobile recording truck and Mr Archibald Curry holding a microphone as a soldier records a message. Photograph taken in Casale on 25 April 1944 by George Robert Bull. Ref: DA-05596-F. Alexander Turnbull Library,



Members of the 28th New Zealand (Maori) Battalion with the New Zealand Broadcasting Unit, taken during World War II (1939-1945) by Dr C N D'Arcy, possibly in Tripoli. Ref: DA-11481-F Alexander Turnbull Library.

The two men in front of the Mobile Unit truck are broadcaster Arch Curry holding the microphone, recording Captain Charles Bennett (Ngāti Pīkiao, Ngāti Whakaue) They are probably recording [this series on the Māori Battalion's actions in Libya](#).



A queue of New Zealand soldiers waiting to broadcast home from the Broadcasting Unit at Maadi Camp in Egypt during World War II. Photograph taken on 16 July 1943 by George Frederick Kaye. Ref: DA-03858-F Alexander Turnbull Library.





Arch Currie [sic. Curry] standing on a Morris truck at El Alamein, Egypt, looking through binoculars. Original caption reads: "NZ Div hold off enemy for whole day covering withdrawal of other troops to El Alamein. Shows one of our trucks burning." Photograph taken circa 9 July 1942 by H Paton. Ref: DA-06752-F Alexander Turnbull Library



Interior of the Mobile Broadcasting Unit truck in Egypt, with Noel Palmer and disc cutting equipment. (RNZ photographic collection, Ngā Taonga Sound & Vision.)



Noel Palmer inside the Mobile Unit truck in Egypt (The New Zealand Listener, 1 May 1942)



Original staff of the Mobile Broadcasting Unit in Egypt: (l-r) Norman Johnston, Noel Palmer, Doug Laurenson.  
(The New Zealand Listener. c.1941)



A typical U-series 12-inch, 78rpm acetate disc, after cleaning and digitisation. It features a National Broadcasting Service label, hand-written in fountain pen by Mobile Unit broadcasters. U988 is one of the discs used to record [a concert by the Māori Battalion in Egypt in 1941](#) (Photograph Ngā Taonga Sound & Vision)



Detail of the disc label for U988: "23/9/1941 NZBU An Open-Air Concert by a Māori Battalion Pt. 3". Note the hand-made censor's label reading "Do Not Play". This part of the concert features a performance of the waiata "E pari rā" – a lament written by Paraire Tomoana for Māori soldiers killed in World War I. It was probably considered unsuitable for morale-boosting, war-time radio broadcasts. (Photograph Ngā Taonga Sound & Vision.)



Repatriated New Zealand prisoners of war recording messages for family back home, Helwan, Egypt, during World War 2 - Photograph taken by George Bull. Ref: DA-03223-F Alexander Turnbull Library.

From left: Charles Goodwyn Lewis (with a portable disc recorder), Mobile Unit commentator John William Proudfoot (holding microphone), Sergeant Harry A. Taituha, Private C. A. Petrie.

## 2.5 Bibliography

This should be, where possible, a list of 3-6 published sources that have been produced using (i.e. drawing heavily on) the documentary heritage to attest to the item/collection's significance.

### **Publishing:**

Brown, Martyn *The Politics of Forgetting: New Zealand, Greece and Britain at War*. Kew, VIC, Australia, Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2019, 408pp

Mortimer, Gavin *The Men Who Made the SAS: The History of the Long Range Desert Group*. London, Great Britain, Constable, 2015, 276pp.

Vaughan, Terry *Whistle as You Go - The Story of the Kiwi Concert Party* Auckland, N.Z., Random House, 1995, 191pp

Burns, Christopher *Parading Kiwis: New Zealand Soldier Concert Parties 1916-1954*, MA thesis, The University of Auckland, 2012

### **Digital publishing:**

[www.28maoribattalion.org.nz](http://www.28maoribattalion.org.nz). The official 28<sup>th</sup> Māori Battalion website, created by the Ministry for Culture and Heritage between 2010-2014, features nearly 100 sound recordings from the Mobile Unit U-series collection in [the website's audio gallery](#). Most have been transcribed and te reo Māori content translated by historian Dr Monty Soutar and senior researcher Leanne Tāmaki.

Other websites created by the Ministry for Culture and Heritage have also drawn on this collection for archival audio content: i.e. <https://nzhistory.govt.nz/media/sound/bernard-freyberg-empire-day>

### **Broadcasting:**

This collection has been drawn on extensively by Radio New Zealand and other broadcasters producing documentary programmes about New Zealand's military history, particularly around Anzac Day and significant military event anniversaries.

Iwi radio stations such as Radio Ngāti Porou draw on recordings of the 28<sup>th</sup> Māori Battalion from this collection for their broadcasts on Anzac Day and around other significant military anniversaries.

[Te Rōpu Rua Tekau-Mā-Waru ā Tū: the 28th Māori Battaliion](#) 1980, Producer: Whai Ngata  
Episodes of RNZ's long-running "Spectrum" radio documentary series:  
[Spectrum 777 The Turning Point - Alamein](#) 1992, Producer Jack Perkins.  
[Spectrum 422 and 423 - Sing As We Go](#) 1982, Producer: Alwyn Owen  
[Spectrum – Remembering Eddie Vazey](#), 2012 Producer: David Steemson

Recordings from this collection have featured in multiple television history documentaries, particularly those produced for Anzac Day broadcasts by Māori Television.

*El Alamein – a line in the Sand*, 2013, Māori Television Service (Dir. Cameron Bennett)

*Requiem for Charlie*, 2012, Māori Television Service documentary on Maori Battalion veteran Charlie Shelford. (Dir. Tainui Stephens)

*Hitler & The Gumdiggers – the story of A Company*, 2013, Māori Television Service documentary on the northern tribes of the Maori Battalion. (Dir. Tainui Stephens.)

[Māori Battalion March to Victory](#), 1990, TVNZ (Dir. Tainui Stephens),

### **Published compilations of music and spoken word sound recordings:**

*Ake, Ake, Kia Kaha E! (Songs of the New Zealand 28 'Māori' Battalion)* "He puiaki pūoru - treasures in sound" is a series of remastered music of historical significance produced by the Alexander Turnbull Library, National Library of New Zealand Te Puna Mātauranga o Aotearoa", Atoll Limited, 2009, [CDR]

*Sing as we go - The story of the Kiwi Concert Party*, Perkins, Jack, Kiwi Concert Party. Replay Radio, Radio New Zealand, 1982, [cassette]



## Section 3: Assessment Against the Criteria

### 3.1 History/provenance

Provide a summary of the provenance of the documentary heritage. For example, how and when was the material acquired and integrated into the holdings of the institution?

The New Zealand Mobile Broadcasting Unit Recordings were made in the field during World War II. The two Mobile Unit teams recorded in North Africa, the Middle East and Italy and in the Pacific, between 1940 -1945.

The discs they created were sent back to New Zealand for broadcast by the National Broadcasting Service, and later, were held in the Service's "special library", the forerunner of the Sound Archives. At first this was in Wellington, then Timaru and later Christchurch. Until October 2012 they were part of the Radio New Zealand Sound Archives collection which was then deposited with the New Zealand Film Archive when the RNZ Sound Archives merged with this organisation. In 2014 The Film Archive, Sound Archives and the TVNZ Archives merged to form Ngā Taonga Sound & Vision.

In 2016 the discs were moved from the former RNZ Sound Archives premises in Christchurch, along with the rest of the physical collection. They are now housed in Ngā Taonga's vaults in Avalon, Lower Hutt.

### 3.2. Uniqueness of the documentary heritage

Give a brief explanation of why the documentary heritage is unique and irreplaceable.

This collection is a unique record of the first occasion when broadcasters accompanied New Zealand armed forces into conflict. These recordings are an invaluable account of the events of this period, the men and women who took part, and an irreplaceable record of new developments in New Zealand media history.

A handful of recordings of broadcaster Arch Curry's action "despatches" or reports on significant military engagements, filed via the BBC, also exist in the British Library Sound Archives, but otherwise this collection is entirely unique.

It is known that not all discs recorded by the Mobile Unit survived the war. Of those that made it back to New Zealand, many did not find their way into the archives of the Broadcasting Service. However, the nearly 1600 that remain mean that this is still believed to be among the world's larger extant collections of sound recordings made in World War II conflict theatres.

It has been estimated that almost 10 percent of New Zealand personnel who served with the New Zealand Division in the war were recorded by the Mobile Units. This means per capita, it must be one of the most representative collections of any nation's "voices of war."

Leading New Zealand military personalities heard on these discs, such as General Sir Bernard Freyberg, Colonel Sir Charles Bennett and General Sir Howard Kippenberger, went on to have distinguished careers in public life after the war, and subsequent recordings of them exist elsewhere in Ngā Taonga's collections also.

Members of the 2NZEF who were well-known in other fields were recorded; such as commercial broadcaster Selwyn Toogood, artist Peter McIntyre and wrestling champion Lofty Blomfield. But for many hundreds of other speakers, these discs are the only record of them and their part in the war. For many New Zealand families, these are the only record of the voice of a departed family member.

Especially poignant are the recordings of 65 New Zealanders who served with the Royal Navy on the cruiser HMS Neptune, which was destroyed by a mine in the Mediterranean in December 1941, only a few weeks after the men recorded messages home with the Mobile Unit. The loss of all but one of the Neptune's crew including all 150 New Zealanders, makes this our worst naval disaster. The recordings of HMS Neptune's men featured in the Royal New Zealand Navy's 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary commemorations of this disaster, in 2016.

Within the WWII Mobile Unit recordings, the discs which captured the voices and performances of the men of the 28<sup>th</sup> Māori Battalion are especially treasured as taonga Māori. These represent a unique record of the men of Te Rua Tekau mā Waru a Tūmataunga, whose sacrifice and service was described by Sir Apirana Ngata as "the price of citizenship." The formidable reputation of this unit is treasured in te ao Māori and the recordings made of the voices of its men are an intrinsic part of its legacy and irreplaceable.

### 3.3 Assessment against the significance criteria

Provide an explanation of what criteria the documentary heritage meets and why it meets those criteria. The documentary heritage must meet at least one of the criteria in this section. An explanation of each criteria is given on the front page of this form.

#### Time:

Archival sound recordings are a portal to another time and place. The voices and sounds captured in some of the recordings made by the WWII Mobile Units, transport listeners to places few New Zealanders would ever see, whether in the 1940s or today: [a Māori Battalion concert in the desert battlefields of Egypt](#) or [the myriad sounds of night in a tropical jungle](#) surrounding a New Zealand camp on the remote Solomon Islands.

The recordings in this collection capture the spirit of wartime New Zealand, starting with [the bands, singing and cheers which farewelled the Mobile Unit](#) and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Echelon from Wellington's wharves in August 1940. Due to military censorship, the messages home from the men are resolutely upbeat ("Chin up darling - We'll soon have Jerry on the run") and the correspondents' action reports tend to emphasize campaign successes. But occasionally terrible losses are mentioned, such as in the reports from officers of the Māori Battalion [on the campaign in Crete](#).

The accents and language of the men in the recordings evoke a distant New Zealand and shine light on changes in our speech and vocabulary. The messages are littered with "cheerios" and references to feeling "top line". Britain is often referred to as "Home" and many officers' accents are decidedly R.P. (Received Pronunciation.)

However, the Kiwi accent is clearly heard in most, and a surprising number of Pākēha speakers begin their recordings with "Kia ora." Many of the Māori speakers give their reports or messages home in te reo Māori – a valuable record of mita or dialects which are now being revived by iwi. They greet not only whānau, hapu and iwi but also rangatira who would be listening, such as Tā Apirana Ngata.

Officers and men of the Māori Battalion were recorded, as well as Māori pilots serving in the R.A.F. The broadcasts reveal the high regard this unit had among Pākēha during the war, with multiple speakers referring to the Māori reputation as unrelenting combat soldiers.

In what was an innovative step at the time, the broadcasters of the Mobile Units deliberately conveyed the part ordinary New Zealand men and women were taking in the war. Rather than just recording the views of officers, they recorded personnel of all ranks, from General Bernard Freyberg to infantrymen, cooks and drivers. They surveyed a wide range of units, who all talked about their experience of the war and their part in it.

Exciting stories were recorded from escaped prisoners of war, men evacuated from the campaigns in Crete and Greece and members of the Long Range Desert Group (the forerunner of the S.A.S.). But there are also descriptions of the more mundane but vital work of men serving in postal units, army laundries and as bakers working in a pie factory set up in Egypt to feed hungry Kiwis.

The few women heard in these recordings are found in the only roles open to their gender in a battle theatre of this era: they are nurses working in field hospitals, W.A.A.C.s serving in the Forces Clubs or Y.M.C.A. canteens – and the wife of the Commander of the New Zealand Division, Lady Barbara Freyberg.

**Place:**

The reports of the Mobile Unit broadcasters provide a valuable historic record of significant New Zealand military actions, in locations whose names have become milestones in New Zealand's military history.

The microphones rode with the New Zealanders [when they took Tripoli](#) and [liberated Florence](#), and they captured the sounds of the bombs and artillery shelling of El Alamein and Cassino, which can be heard behind the [eye witness descriptions of the action provided by commentator Arch Curry](#). They also recorded the hymns and funeral services for men killed [fighting in the Solomon Islands](#)

As well as these historically significant locations, the recordings also capture culturally important moments, such as [a recording of Christmas carols in te reo Māori](#), sung by wounded men of the Māori Battalion recovering in a field hospital after the Alamein offensive.

**People:**

The broadcasters of the Mobile Unit were not radio journalists in the modern sense (a position which wasn't created in New Zealand until 1962), but their reports represent a significant advance in New Zealand media history. Even though they were embedded with the New Zealand Division (with the rank of officers) and had to operate under the restrictions of military censorship, they brought the sound of war to New Zealand radio listeners and altered the country's understanding of conflict. They conveyed something of the experiences of New Zealand's men and women to their families back home and gave them a greater understanding of what was happening on the other side of the world.

As he prepared to depart from Wellington with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Echelon in August 1940, commentator Doug Laurensen recorded [the Mobile Unit's first recording](#) onboard a troopship at the wharf. He and the other two men of the unit, Norman Johnston and Noel Palmer all recorded brief farewell messages and told listeners what they hoped to achieve: "*In the days that lie ahead we hope to be able to bring you news of your men wherever they are stationed... We have been building, testing, altering and installing technical equipment in this truck of ours...and we feel we will have great opportunities to link you in your homes with New Zealand men on active service overseas... Before we sign off, here is a message from the men of the 3rd Echelon: They ask me to tell you to cheer up, write often and to look forward to their return, some day.*" <sup>1</sup>

When the New Zealanders were involved in major events, such as the fighting at El Alamein and Cassino, or [the awarding of the Victoria Cross to Lieutenant Charles Upham](#) and [Lieutenant Moananui-a-Kiwa Ngarimu](#), the Mobile Unit broadcasters were able to relay the news via radio telephone to the BBC in London which then broadcast it via shortwave radio to New Zealand. Their reports were thus heard within 24 hours of the event, a new level of immediacy in international reporting for New Zealand radio listeners.

The breadth of interview subjects and talks recorded by the Mobile Units reflect a development in the democratisation of broadcasting in New Zealand. Recording equipment was only purchased by the National Broadcasting Service in 1935, and the archived radio programmes recorded over the years leading up to World War II tend to contain mainly the voices of "the good and the great" – leaders in the country's political, religious, cultural and sporting life. There were only a few of these recorders based in radio stations which were only in the main urban centres. Recording in the years before magnetic tape, meant using expensive discs and therefore archived recordings of the voices and experiences of 'ordinary' New Zealanders before the war – be they working class, rural, Māori or women - are few and far between.

The democratising effect of the war effort, which demanded the participation of New Zealanders from all walks of life, meant the Mobile Unit set about to deliberately capture the words and thoughts of the 'everyday Kiwi' who was doing his or her bit overseas – as well as the official speeches by senior officers and visiting V.I.P.s, such as Prime Minister Peter Fraser and even Winston Churchill.

In a pre-television era when radio listening was a nationally-shared and unifying experience, the broadcasts of these recordings exposed listeners to the words and voices of a broad cross-section of their fellow Kiwis: a Southland farmer for example, might tune in and hear of the latest feats of the Māori Battalion's C Company "Cowboys" of Ngāti Porou, and gain greater understanding of Māori as citizens and men.

The broadcasts of recordings made by the Mobile Units were so popular when played on-air back in New Zealand, that they were repeated twice a week during the war in programmes called "The Services Sessions" or the "With the Boys Overseas", which featured the hundreds of messages home. Many years later, Mobile Unit commentator Doug Laurensen reflected on his wartime service, remembering 'the infinite sadness in these pitifully brief messages': "I shall never forget those long, long lines of troops, stretching across the blazing sands, all intent on what they were going to say in the precious moments of broadcasting time: *"Hello Mum, How are you? Are you there love? I'm fit as a fiddle. Hello son, are you being a good boy and looking after Mummy? That's the chap, keep it up."*<sup>2</sup>

We have anecdotal evidence that many men wrote home to family after making recordings, to alert them to listen out for the greeting. When the recorded discs arrived in Wellington, a Broadcasting Service staff member had the grim job of cross-checking the lists of names of the men recorded, with official casualty lists. If a man had been killed since being recorded, his disc was pulled and not broadcast. This is probably one of the reasons that many discs did not survive the war – their valuable aluminium core meant they would have been broken down and the metal reused in the war effort.

The discs of musical performances by the Māori Battalion, military bands and The Kiwi Concert Party would continue to have a life beyond 1945, featuring in radio request programmes for returned servicemen for several decades to come. For veterans, hearing recordings of songs such as "The Māori Battalion March" might evoke some of their few pleasant memories of war service and were a chance to share with their families something of their largely un-shareable wartime experiences.

#### **Subject and Theme:**

Media historian Patrick Day wrote about this collection: "The broadcasting units were an important factor in transmission of wartime information and maintenance of moral among troops. They represented the first presence of broadcasters among NZ military forces...and proved that wartime broadcasting was possible. Under the most difficult conditions they demonstrated what could be done with the newly invented recording equipment...the contents of the broadcasts indicated a new path for post-war documentaries, concentrating on recording the voices and stories of everyday men and women."<sup>3</sup>

The recordings in these series have been used by researchers, military historians and authors both in New Zealand and overseas and are cited in multiple works. However, easy access to archival sound recordings has only been made possible relatively recently, with the advent of the internet. In the past, researchers had to come to the sound archives offices to study the recordings, which limited easy access.

When the current digitisation of the collection is complete, it will enhance the ability to now upload the recordings to Ngā Taonga's online catalogue. It is hoped many more researchers will

be made aware of this rich collection and the insights it can shed on New Zealand's military, social and media history.

1. *Embarkation of the 3rd Echelon commentary - Parts 1-8, 27 Aug 1940.* Ngā Taonga Sound & Vision ID11155
2. *Doug Laurenson - talk on wartime music, 1964?* Ngā Taonga Sound & Vision ID30392
3. Day, Patrick *The Radio Years – a history of broadcasting in New Zealand* Auckland University Press, 1994, p.26

### 3. 4 Testimony of at least two independent experts

The committee requires testimony from at least two independent people or organisations who can give an informed opinion about the significance and provenance of the documentary heritage.

The informed opinion should focus on the criteria for inscription provided above and on the front page of this form. Please provide up to one page from each expert in support of your submission.

#### Expert One

Name	Dr. Martyn Brown Honorary Research Fellow School of Historical and Philosophical Inquiry University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia
Qualification(s)	Ph D in History (University of Queensland) MA (Research) University of Sydney PostGrad Dip Business Research (University of Southern Queensland) Grad Dip Information Technology (University of Southern Queensland) Grad Dip Library Science (Queensland University of Technology)
Contact number	
Email	
Paragraph in support	<p>I support this nomination because of the importance of Ngā Taonga Sound &amp; Vision's collection of the New Zealand Broadcasting Service Mobile Unit. The recordings provide an invaluable resource for the history community They do this in several ways.</p> <p>Firstly, the collection illuminates certain critical situations where there are simply no paper-based archives or living witnesses. This is particularly true of the tumultuous actions in North Africa where armies from numerous nations determined the future course of the world. You will find citations of items from the archives in printed publications or segments in recorded sound productions that deal with this and other events.</p> <p>Secondly, by incorporating these sound recordings in public speaking and teaching scenarios, ideas and a sense of contextual history are communicated in an engaging way. This applies to audiences that include diasporic groups, the general public and students. Audience members have included diplomatic, ambassadors, immigrant groups, undergraduate and postgraduate students and fellow historians. Although it is a New Zealand-focussed archive, it is relevant to the historical curiosity of multiple peoples. Speaking exercises delivered in Oceania, North America and Europe are enhanced by these recordings.</p> <p>Finally, Ngā Taonga Sound &amp; Vision have striven to make these irreplaceable recordings accessible to the researchers and other parties. Their digitisation and client services clearly show they want their collections to be explored and utilised to the maximum. I have personally experienced their flexibility and responsiveness where the challenges faced by distant researchers have been overcome.</p> <p>I fully support this nomination for the reasons given above and with the</p>

	overall belief that Ngā Taonga Sound & Vision are enhancing the world wide community's understanding of individual and collective histories of nations and peoples.
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### Expert Two

Name	Leanne Tāmaki (Ngāi Tūhoe) Senior researcher Ministry for Culture and Heritage Wellington
Qualification(s)	BA, BA (Hons), MA – University of Auckland
Contact number	
Email	
Paragraph in support	<p>The wartime recordings of the 28th Māori Battalion are a taonga (something highly valued). They are testament to the importance of Māori culture and positively affirm Māori culture and identity. Furthermore, these taonga are an invaluable record of tīpuna (ancestors) and source of knowledge. They are an integral element of the 28th Māori Battalion website, which stands as a place to record, remember, honour and maintain information and knowledge of the 28th Māori Battalion.</p> <p>The expressions of Māori culture practiced during the war, as evidenced in this collection, are both positive and affirming. The 'real-time' messages home are a form of mihi – the practice of greeting, acknowledging and paying tribute in speech. They are also quite poignant and provide a tangible connection for descendants to their family members, some of whom they would never have met.</p> <p>Waiata (song), is a vital part of Māori life and they perform many functions including expressing grief. <a href="#">This rare recording</a> of a waiata by the Māori Battalion is a tribute to 2nd Lieutenant Te Moananui a Kiwa Ngarimu VC who was killed in battle in March 1943. Ngarimu was also the only Māori to receive the Victoria Cross, the highest military honour, in the Second World War.</p> <p>The importance of spirituality and its role in ensuring the well-being of the men is affirmed in the ritual of holding <a href="#">prayer services</a>. The recordings of te reo Māori (Māori language) and iwi (tribal) dialect and waiata, haka and hīmene, are all important sources of knowledge especially of the language and nuances from the 1940s.</p> <p>These taonga are a significant record of the service and contribution of the 28th Māori Battalion to Aotearoa New Zealand and to a critical world-wide event.</p>



**Expert Three**

Name	Andrew McRae. Defence and Veterans Affairs Reporter Radio New Zealand
Qualification(s)	Diploma in Journalism, Auckland University of Technology
Contact number	
Email	
Paragraph in support	<p>I certainly support this nomination. I have worked as RNZ's Veterans' Affairs reporter for a number of years and many times I have called on Ngā Taonga Sound and Vision for material to use in and to enhance radio stories I am writing connected to the Second World War. The range of material is extensive, well catalogued and superbly preserved and curated.</p> <p>Compiling numerous stories for RNZ on Second World War anniversaries over the last few years have been brilliantly illustrated with the use of the audio from these archives. It has always been a wonder to me to think of the early radio producers/reporters who were often in the heat of the battle and were able to record live scene accounts and interviews during the war.</p> <p>The foresight of the then NZBS to send a mobile recording truck to North Africa and then later up into Italy and beyond was high commendable and has provided future generations with a rich source of material.</p> <p>I commend the nomination for these recordings to be entered into the UNESCO Memory of the World Register of documentary heritage.</p>

**Expert Four**

Name	Jim Sullivan
Qualification(s)	Historian and retired broadcaster. Former producer and presenter of Radio New Zealand's history programme "Sounds Historical." Former chief archivist for Radio New Zealand and manager of the Oral History Centre at the Alexander Turnbull Library.
Contact number	
Email	
Paragraph in support	<p>The U (Unit) and P (Pacific) collections are an important resource which will increase in relevance, especially when the centennial of World War Two occupies the minds of researchers and social history writers, as we approach the 2030s.</p> <p>The radio teams sent to the Middle East, Italy and the Pacific were not journalists and while New Zealand listeners relied on the BBC shortwave broadcasts for their immediate war news, the mobile units achieved much as morale boosters, giving both a New Zealand</p>

	<p>perspective to the military actions and, more importantly, giving troops and their families an intimate link with the messages home recorded in the field.</p> <p>Even the battle reports, although heavily censored, at least reassured those at home that familiar radio voices of the era were sharing the experiences of their boys at the front. (Popular Christchurch announcer Arch Curry is almost drowned out by the noise of the gigantic bombardment at El Alamein.)</p> <p>But it was the troops' messages home (arriving a few weeks after recording) which ensured the popularity of the work done by the mobile units. The voices of ordinary soldiers (sounding like writer John Mulgan's "practical men who marched into history"), slow, drawling and laconic, aroused emotions in the family at home which no letter could match. Poignantly, each disc had to be checked before broadcast. Those from servicemen who had been killed in action were, of course not broadcast, but family were invited into the radio studio to listen to the message.</p> <p>In more recent times, broadcasts of messages have produced emotional reactions from those who were children of men who died while serving and who had never before heard their father's voice. (The sinking of HMS <i>Neptune</i> in 1941 cost 150 New Zealand lives and recordings made with the crew only days before the sinking are just some of the very special discs in the U collection).</p> <p>The sending of recording units overseas also marked a major step in New Zealand broadcasting history as, although disc recording had been used since the mid-1930s, the broadcasters had rarely moved outside the studio to make recordings. The U and P recordings proved it could be done relatively easily, and so followed the post-war Mobile Unit (MU) oral history collection of the late 1940s (inscribed on the UNESCO Memory of the World register in 2014) and the general acceptance of recording oral history as part of radio's activity. The U and P collections, like the MU collection's contribution to the study of colonial speech, also provide the opportunity to study the speech of second and third generation New Zealanders.</p> <p>Researchers seeking information on family history, war history, speech, censorship and technical developments in broadcasting will find valuable material in the U and P collections and efforts should be made to see that the voice of each service person recorded can be linked to online sites like the Auckland War Memorial Museum Cenotaph database which now offers a very brief outline of each person's war record. The voices plus the base records can, when digitised and made available online, ensure that our knowledge of the years of World War II will be much enhanced by the time of its centenary.</p> <p>As a broadcaster, oral historian and writer, my only regret is that I won't be around when it all happens!</p>
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**Expert Five**

Name	Gavin Mortimer
Qualification(s)	British author, military historian, journalist
Contact number	
Email	
Paragraph in support	<p>The work of the NZ Broadcasting Service Mobile Unit during World War Two, when they accompanied the 2NZEF in North Africa and Italy, has left an invaluable legacy for historians such as myself, which is why I believe the recordings should be entered into the UNESCO Memory of the World Register of documentary heritage.</p> <p>I drew heavily on the recordings when I wrote my history of the Long Range Desert Group, <i>The Men Who Made the SAS</i> [Constable, 2014] and they were a wonderful resource, bringing to life the deeds of brave men who have long since passed into history. To be able to listen to the soldiers describe operations and life in the desert was powerful, poignant and, above all, educational.</p> <p>The innovation of the NZ Broadcasting Service Unit all those years ago, and the intrepid manner in which they collected their extraordinary oral histories, deserves to be honoured with an entry in the UNESCO register. What better way to ensure that future generations can listen to, and learn from, these gallant soldiers in the hope that the world will never experience such a cataclysmic war.</p>

The above experts have given their written permission to provide this information to the Memory of the World Committee and they have agreed that the provided information can be published without email and contact details and that they can be contacted by the Register Subcommittee if required. X Yes  No

## Section 4: Legal Information

### 4.1 Owner (name and contact details)

Provide the name and full contact details of the owner or owners, whether an institution or an individual.

Radio New Zealand  
155 The Terrace  
P O Box 123  
Wellington 6140  
+64 4 4741999

### 4.2 Custodian (name and contact details if different from the owner)

Provide the name and full contact details of the custodian, whether an institution or an individual. Sometimes the custodian of the documentary heritage may not be the same as the owner. It is essential to establish both before a nomination can be added to the Register.

Ngā Taonga Sound & Vision  
PO Box 11-449  
Wellington 6142  
+64 3 3748468

### 4.3 Legal status

State whether the documentary heritage is owned privately, or by a public institution, or by a commercial corporation. Details of legal and administrative powers for the preservation of the documentary heritage should be the name of the Act, or other instrument of administrative power, that gives the owner and/or the custodian the legal power to preserve the documentary heritage.

The RNZ charter under the Radio New Zealand Act 1995 includes the statutory function of RNZ to provide archiving of programmes that are likely to be of historical interest in New Zealand. Up until 30 September 2012 RNZ and Sound Archives Ngā Taonga Kōrero (SANTK) held the Sound Archives for the purpose of fulfilling this statutory charter function of RNZ.

On 1 October 2012 SANTK was transferred to the New Zealand Film Archive. RNZ and SANTK determined that they may continue to meet the statutory charter function of RNZ by depositing the Sound Archives with NZFA. RNZ obtained the agreement in writing of the Chief Archivist under the Public Records Act 2005 to defer under section 22 of that Act, for a specified period to be agreed between RNZ and the Chief Archivist, the transfer of the deposited sound material that has been in existence for 25 years or more and that is otherwise required by section 21 of that Act.

Exceptions under the Copyright Act 1994 for archiving and providing public access also apply.

On 1 August 2014 the NZFA, SANTK and the TVNZ Archive were amalgamated and launched as Ngā Taonga Sound & Vision, the brand name for the New Zealand Archive of Film, Television and Sound Ngā Taonga Whitiāhua Me Ngā Taonga Kōrero.

The WWII Mobile Unit discs are public records, produced during the decades when the Broadcasting Service was a government department. The transfer of these records from RNZ to Archives NZ has been deferred until 2023 (under Section 22 of the Public Records Act 2005), but it is understood by all parties that negotiations prior to that date will involve a full

appraisal of the collection and negotiation with the Chief Archivist to determine the future of the records.

#### 4.4 Accessibility

Provide a brief description of how the documentary heritage may be accessed. All access procedures and restrictions should be clearly stated.

There are three levels of access:

- access to verify the significance, integrity and security of the material. This is the minimum condition for inscription
- access for reproduction, which is strongly encouraged
- public access in physical, digital, or other form

The original collection material is held onsite at Ngā Taonga Sound & Vision's Avalon vaults, in a secure temperature-controlled storage facility. Only archive staff are allowed to handle original objects for the purposes of reproduction for preservation and access.

The public can access information about the material via the online catalogue at [www.ngataonga.org.nz](http://www.ngataonga.org.nz). The print catalogues published in 1996 are also held in many New Zealand public and university libraries.

Mp3 access copies of the fully digitised recordings can be uploaded to their entry in the online database on request. Copies of recordings can also be supplied as downloadable mp3 digital files or on CDR.

The recordings are available for re-use by GLAM institutions, broadcasters, documentary makers etc. subject to clearance by Ngā Taonga on behalf of the owner (RNZ).

Recent digitisation of these recordings is enabling them to be shared by Ngā Taonga via social media channels, to increase public awareness of – and access to – this collection.

A video slide-show was created to mark the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the invasion of Mono Island in the Solomon Islands, in October 2018: <https://vimeo.com/297204416> It features several recordings made by the Mobile Unit in the Pacific in 1943-1944.

#### 4.5 Copyright Status

For documentary heritage items that are subject to copyright, details should be provided on the relevant copyright legislation and copyright owner(s). Any other factors affecting the legal status of the documentary heritage should be noted. For example, is any institution required by law to preserve the documentary heritage in this nomination?

The material is out of copyright. (Crown copyright prior to 1945 which has expired.) See 4.3 for details of legal requirements around this collection.

### Section 5: Stakeholders

The nominating institution is accountable for consultation with all relevant stakeholders before submitting the nomination.

#### 5.1 Owner

The owner(s) of the documentary heritage has been consulted:  Yes  No

## 5.2 Custodian

The custodian(s) of the documentary heritage has been consulted:  Yes  No

## 5.3 Significant Stakeholders

Stakeholders with a significant interest in the content of the documentary heritage e.g. iwi, family members, have been consulted, if relevant:  Yes  No

## Section 6: Care and Preservation and Risk Assessment

Identify any risks to the survival of the nominated documentary heritage. We understand if you have not done a formal risk assessment.

Note: a successful inscription may assist you to obtain funds to preserve and care for the nominated documentary heritage.

If your nomination is successful, we may request additional information on the care and preservation of the inscribed documentary heritage.

Most of the original analogue discs in this collection were migrated to digital audio tape (DAT) in the 1990s and then to CDR in the 2000s. At the time, these were the industry standard for audio preservation, however, they proved to be unstable formats for long-term preservation.

Ngā Taonga is currently re-digitising the discs to the present industry standard 24 bit 96 kHz linear PCM BWF .wav file. Once digitally preserved, the files are entered into Ngā Taonga's Digital Archive where they are written to LTO tape twice, with one tape copy removed to a separate geographic location. Access to the preservation master files is restricted and actively managed.

At the same time, a lower resolution but more easily used mp3 access copy is also created and all digital files are verified and checked for quality and completeness.

These are not of 'preservation' standard but are suitable quality to be used as access files and as such are made readily available to staff or to clients. (Upon request the preservation master files can also be retrieved if required for distribution or editorial purposes.)

The access files will be progressively uploaded to each recording's entry in Ngā Taonga's online database.

The lacquer (or acetate) discs require cleaning and conservation before being digitised, as they are subject to palmitic acid leaching. Such discs are recognised as a top preservation priority by IASA (The International Association of Sound and Audiovisual Archives) "*.. priority must be given to "lacquer" or "acetate" discs. Even when these discs are playable they are at grave risk of suddenly cracking or crazing without warning. This is because of the steadily increasing stress between the lacquer coating and the supporting base plate. This stress is generated by shrinkage of the lacquer coating. Lacquer discs should, therefore, be given the highest priority in the copying program.*"<sup>1</sup>

Read a Ngā Taonga Sound & Vision blog about [the current digitisation of these recordings](#)

1. [The Safeguarding of Audiovisual Heritage- ethics, principles and preservation strategy](#). IASA-TC 03, Web edition co-edited by Will Prentice and Lars Gaustad.(2017)

## Section 7: Summary

Provide a brief summary describing the documentary heritage and how it meets the criteria for inscription on the Aotearoa/New Zealand Memory of the World Register.

Keep your summary to no more than 300 words as, if successful, it will be used on the website ([www.unescomow.org.nz](http://www.unescomow.org.nz)) to describe why the documentary heritage has been inscribed on the New Zealand Register and given UNESCO recognition.

The nearly 1600 sound discs recorded by the New Zealand Mobile Broadcasting Unit during World War II are an invaluable record of the voices of New Zealanders at war.

Recorded in the conflict zones of North Africa, the Middle East, Italy and the Pacific between 1941 and 1945, these fragile acetate recordings were made for broadcast on radio in New Zealand.

The collection contains a wide variety of material: action reports on military engagements; 'talks' by and interviews with, service personnel on their role in the war or actions they have been involved in; coverage of non-conflict events such as concerts, sports matches and other social occasions, and hundreds of simple 'messages home' recorded by servicemen and women who were selected by ballot to record greetings to loved ones.

The Mobile Unit commentators were the first broadcasters to accompany New Zealand forces into action, providing important eye-witness records of historic events such as the battles of El Alamein and Cassino, or the liberation of Florence and Tripoli. The collection warrants a place in New Zealand media history for this milestone alone. However, the recordings also represent a development in the democratisation of our broadcast media, capturing the involvement of hundreds of 'everyday' New Zealanders in the war effort, as well as generals, VIPS and heroes like Victoria Cross winners Charles Upham and Moananui-a-Kiwa Ngarimu.

The recordings of the men of the 28<sup>th</sup> Māori Battalion are especially treasured. Their waiata and kōrero in te reo Māori are an intrinsic part of the legacy of this highly-decorated unit and evidence of its formidable reputation.

The World War II New Zealand Mobile Broadcasting Unit Recordings bring to life key moments in our country's history and the voices of our people at war are a taonga for generations of New Zealanders to treasure.

## Section 8: Promotion of documentary heritage

Inscription to a UNESCO Memory of the World register provides an opportunity to promote the importance of documentary heritage.

Give a brief overview of how your institution will use the opportunity of a successful nomination to promote the Memory of the World programme and the importance of documentary heritage. You may wish to consult with communications staff in your organisation to provide an answer to this question.

Ngā Taonga Sound & Vision would be excited to share a successful nomination to the Memory of the World Register with our many social media followers (over 10,000 on Facebook.) The nature of this collection lends itself to multiple posts, highlighting significant individual recordings in the collection over several weeks, or even months.

We would promote the UNESCO recognition of the collection as valuable documentary heritage in a press release to media and our stake-holders and we would write a dedicated blog about it on our website. The inscription would also be the focus of one of Ngā Taonga's weekly on-air radio segments on RNZ's Jesse Mulligan programme.

We would also investigate presenting curated highlights from the Mobile Unit collection in a permanent online exhibition on our website.

### **Section 9: Permission to use visual documentation**

The Aotearoa/New Zealand Memory of the World Committee will also work with you and your communications staff to obtain publicity for the programme and for the successful inscriptions.

Do you give permission for the Committee to use the visual documentation you have provided for Aotearoa/New Zealand Memory of the World publicity purposes (e.g. for brochures/website)?

Yes

No

I would like to be consulted first

*N.B.: Please note several of the photographs provided in this nomination are held by the Alexander Turnbull Library and permission will need to be cleared with them before re-use.*

### **Section 10: Declaration of Authority**

I am authorised to nominate the above documentary heritage to the Aotearoa/New Zealand Memory of the World Register.

Name: Sarah Johnston

Date: 05 November 2019